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Critic's view

'Company' dynamite at players

By BARBARA MICHALS

Who needs "company" in his life? Everybody does, according to the lively Stephen Sondheim musical comedy "Company," current presentation of the Birmingham Village Players.

The Players' attractive, dynamic production concludes this weekend with performances sold out Dec 9-11 at the Playhouse. "Company" consists of a series of vignettes and musical numbers centering around Bobby, a bachelor in his mid-30s and his friends, mostly married couples who find him their favorite "company."

As illustrated by a chorus of husbands singing "Sorry, Grateful," the play views marriage with mixed emotions. It's an institution with plenty of shortcomings, but it's the only game in town worth playing.

the right girl. All the good ones seem to be already taken. Of his current girlfriends, he has a choice between kinky Maria or ditty April.

As Bobby, Steve Lew has charm, savoir-faire and a solid, pleasant singing voice. Bobby's friends are equally talented; all give polished, convincing performances.

Joan Schmitt and Duncan Jones play Sue Delmore and Lisa Jacobson, a somewhat older couple struggling to keep up with young ideas. Wazby Joanne played by Maureen Cook finds her third husband played by Ben Benson, sweet but boring.

Isabel Hume-Joch and Bob Overmyer appear as Jenny and David, a somewhat older couple struggling to keep up with young ideas. Wazby Joanne played by Maureen Cook finds her third husband played by Ben Benson, sweet but boring.

After living together for several years, Amy (Peg Kropchick) and Paul (Don Schore) finally decide to take the plunge into marriage. Amy almost panics at the last minute, though, and Max Kropchick does a great job with a difficult patter song as the prelude that marriage is just not for her.

AS BOBBY'S girlfriends, Sue O'Brien Delmore and Lisa Jacobson are all skillful. Miss Moore adds a whimsical touch to the true rendition of "You Could Drive a Person Crazy." Miss O'Brien's impressive belting out the song "Another Hundred People" while Miss Jacobson takes comedic honors for her bedroom scene with Bobby.

The musical numbers are impressively handled throughout the show. The quality of the singing is consistently strong. Musical director, Priscilla Benson, and choreographer Dee Dee Johns Charlton have attractively packaged each number, particularly the exuberant "Side by Side by Side."

Director Jim Huberton keeps the show moving at a quick pace and the obvious enthusiasm of the cast adds to the overall effect. Huberton also designed the set, an imaginative, multi-level abstraction which simulates various apartments.

The Village Players present "Company" with so much flair and polish that the show's two small flaws are easily forgiven.

The first act finale is so short and weak that its only effect is to leave the audience a bit confused, and why pick that time to rearrange the set for the second act?

A couple of scenes in the first act have the actors lying on the stage floor or sitting on the edge of the stage while speaking. Since the seats at the Village Playhouse have very little slope, this leaves a considerable portion of the audience craning their necks in a futile attempt to see the stage action.

REMINDER

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